

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 07, 2022

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Thayn, Vice Chairman Lent, Senators Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Blair (Johnson), Cook, Ward-Engelking, Nelson

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Thayn** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Vice-Chairman Lent** moved to approve the Minutes of January 20, 2022. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1255: **RELATING TO EDUCATION: Empowering Parents Grant Program Fund.** **Senator Den Hartog** reported the purpose of this legislation is to provide \$1,000 per student with a maximum of \$3,000 per family, with a priority for students in households earning less than \$60,000 per year. This money is intended to support education in Idaho, particularly low income students. The funds are credited to a digital account that parents will have two years to expend the funds. She explained that any entities that wish to provide goods or services on the digital platform would need to go through an approval process from the State Board of Education (SBOE). The request for funding is through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and general signed appropriation for administration costs over two years. This program will include eligible education expenses as approved by SBOE and the parent advisory panel.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Lent** inquired if the program eligibility included non-public students such as home school children. **Senator Den Hartog** explained that it would include public school, private school and home school students. **Senator Nelson** asked what the non-traditional family definition would be, and if that parent or emancipated minor would be eligible for the program. **Senator Den Hartog** said that in order to apply you would need an income verification through the Idaho State Tax Commission to verify the adjusted gross income from the prior year. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked why the bill doesn't have a sunset clause due to the association of funding through ARPA. **Senator Den Hartog** explained that the program, unless more funds are placed into the bucket naturally ends and would not violate any time-lines with the ARPA funding.

Senator Blair showed concern over the exclusion of a sunset clause, continuous appropriation language, the advisory panel, and the participation for rural schools in this program. **Senator Den Hartog** clarified that the sunset clause was not needed in the language due to the natural expiration of the fund, and that the appropriation language was standard for this type of legislation as apposed to continuous funding. Additionally, **Senator Den Hartog** pointed out that the rural districts may have an opportunity to use these funds to enhance or offer things that they may not have been able to before.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked if there was a mechanism to prevent the misuse of

funds. **Senator Den Hartog** explained that a transaction cannot take place unless there is a service provider and an eligible expense. **Senator Nelson** followed up with a question on vetting allowable expenses, and how this may be handled during the course of the program. **Senator Den Hartog** stated that SBOE would have the final say on allowable expenses. **Senator Nelson** asked how the low-income parents and students will hear about this program. **Senator Den Hartog** clarified that the school districts will send out information to students and families when the application opens.

TESTIMONY: **Andy Grover**, Executive Director of School Administrators stated his **support** for **S 1255**.
Karen Byron, Chair of ISBA, Region 7 stated her **support** for **S 1255**.
Blake Youde, Idaho Charter School Network, stated his **support** for **S 1255**.
Paul Stark, Executive Director of the Idaho Education Association, stated his **support** for **S 1255**.
Alex LeBeau, President of the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, stated his **support** for **S 1255**.
Barry Peters, Legal Advisor for Homeschool Idaho, stated his **opposition** for **S 1255**.
Bobbi-Jo Meuleman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Idaho Governor's Office, stated her **support** for **S 1255**.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** finished the presentation of **S 1255** with closing remarks. She stated that this legislation is a new way to engage parents in student success for their education. **Senator Nelson** asked a question about the intent of funds to pay private school tuition costs. **Senator Den Hartog** reassured that this eligible expense of private school tuition costs was specifically struck in the legislation, as it is not the intent. (See Attachment 2)

MOTION: **Senator Cook** moved to send **S 1255** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Woodward** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 29387C1: **Senator Blair** presented **RS 29387C1** as a amendment to Idaho Code to define the term dyslexia and establish programs to specifically address it.

MOTION: **Senator Crabtree** moved to send **RS 29387C1** to print. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Rakesh Mohan**, provided a presentation regarding the **Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) Report Study on School Facilities**. **Mr. Mohan** gave a brief history of the report, stating that this was requested by the Committee, with approval from the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC) and Pro Tempore Winder. **Casey Perry**, Senior Evaluator at OPE, provided additional information on the report including the K-12 public school facilities. **Mr. Perry** discussed building conditions and allocations by school districts, followed by bonds and levees. He also went over what other states are doing and charter schools. He expressed concern regarding the mandate that school districts submit ten year maintenance plans every five years, and the state agency that should receive the plans moving forward. The biggest challenge is the repair or phasing out of facilities that were beyond their expected useful life. Most districts are rural, and conversations with districts indicated that over half of the sample size would need renovations or to be phased out entirely.
Senator Blair asked what the definition of rural is when used in the education regions that were surveyed. **Mr. Perry** replied that the definition of rural is through the National Center for Education Statistics school district classification. **Senator Nelson** inquired about major renovation barriers such as ADA compliance. **Mr. Perry** explained that the needs of the schools that were surveyed are likely

overestimates or underestimates and can have challenges as far as if the building can be classified as sufficient or non-sufficient. He reiterated that this should be a policy consideration for the legislature to commission a statewide facility condition assessment of school buildings.

Senator Nelson made an inquiry regarding the assessment that needs to be done regarding the maintenance and upgrades at school districts, and what the cost as well as timeframe would be. **Mr. Perry** responded that this would be roughly ten cents per square foot with 46 million square feet of public school buildings in Idaho.

Mr. Perry also pointed out that the cost factor in Idaho Code that determines the building replacement value needs to be updated due to a higher need for capital renewals and routine maintenance costs. **Senator Den Hartog** made an inquiry on whether the funding per student, and funding per square foot included what the local expenditures on the buildings are. **Mr. Perry** responded that the total expenditure does include local and state funding. **Mr. Perry** concluded by stating that the self-assessment of school district administrators should be modified to include a professional who can determine what constitutes good, fair, or poor for a building. (See Attachment 1)

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Katy Morden
Secretary